

The logic of bookdesign

A book is a thing

A book is used by looking into it. Usually the visual quality of the book is the *first* concern of bookdesign. For me, the bookbinder, it has always taken the *second* place.

Before a book can be looked into it has to be taken up and opened. First of all the book designer has to make sure that the book can be handled.

Quite often a book is made of paper. The paper of a book may be cheap or expensive but the grain of the paper may not be in one or other direction. The grain is parallel to the back or the book is a rotten thing.

Any work of man is done in space. It begins with the definition of space. In book design the space is defined by the format of the book. (It can be recommended to learn again this most common meaning of the English word *format*)

The first decision in book design is the choice of paper and the definition of the size of the page. There is no design without knowledge of paper

and its behaviour. A designer is making a thing of paper; he is not just decorating the surface of paper.

The worst thing I have ever made is *Letterletter*. 12 times I have now been designing a thing that cannot be handled because the grain of the paper is in the wrong direction. The argument comes from the office of the ATYPI. The format of *Letterletter* is A 4. I thought this to be a good format because the papers which are mailed by the secretary have the same dimensions. It is also easy to get covers at this size. However, the secretary prefers to fold the mail to A 5 because this saves the funds of the association.

Letterletter is mailed at A 5 whereas you are supposed to read it at A 4. I should have made *Letterletter* at A 5 to meet the conditions of mailing and reading equally. As an experienced designer I should at least have discussed the conditions of production and mailing before making *Letterletter* 1.

The importance of the grain is played down by

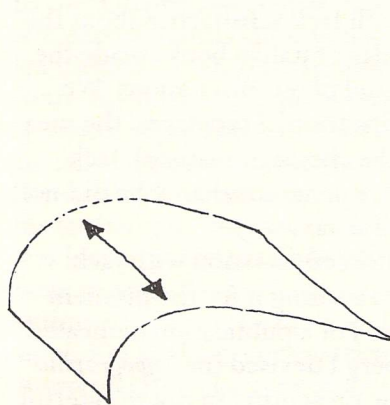


figure 1

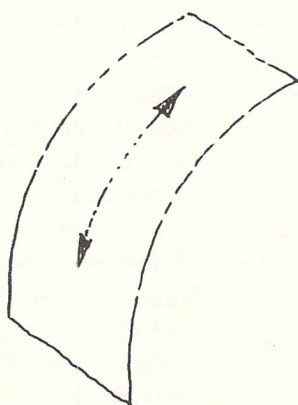


figure 2

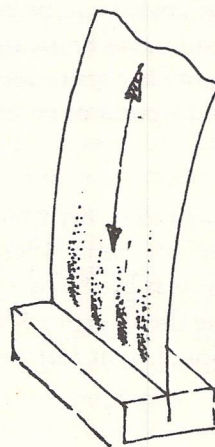


figure 3

comparing figures 1 and 2 only. In the wrong direction paper bends less easily. This is true for plain sheets. When sheets are folded and bound in a book the situation is different (figure 3).

Paper is hygroscopic. It reacts to fluctuations in humidity by expanding and shrinking across the grain. In the spine of the book the paper cannot move. When the grain is not parallel to the spine the leaves are corrugated, which is an effective method for stiffening sheet material. By specifying the orientation of the grain the designer makes sure that the leaves will bend. Designers, printers and publishers who do not care for this first condition of graphic production will probably never learn what design is, but perhaps their customers should be educated to refuse their rubbish.

I have invited a friend to write an issue of *Letterletter* together in a correspondence on fractura. He answered that he preferred to reserve his time and energy for topics of current interest. After having amused myself with the many aspects of this reaction I have dropped it on my desk, upside down: there will be an issue of *Letterletter* introducing the significance of the obsolete fractura for current design.

Editorial

For two or three years I have been working on an issue of *Letterletter* that would be devoted to the significance of fractura for actual typography. Of course, I am assuming that neither my friend nor you are familiar with this significance. *Letterletter* has always been looking for the unusual point of view because designers have to be aware of their point of view. I could never be aware of my point of view if I would not change it every day (a little). If you are sure of your point of view, then good night.

In the most flexible mind, my friend's for instance, The obsolence of fractura seems to be unshaken. At least this war has been won by the nazis who decided to erase the so called Jewish script from our civilization. I want *Letterletter* to stir up this conviction.

The project of fractura (the subject is gradually taking the dimensions of a project) depends on my

Remember for now:

a book is a thing

assumption. If you see at once the significance of the writing in the word

Editorial

I would be lost. So please, do not see it.

While thinking I remembered a manuscript that I have seen in Amsterdam in 1959. When I had found out its signature, *Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 17001*, I told Fernand Baudin about this book and he offered to look for it. He went to Paris, examined the manuscript and ordered photographs for *Letterletter*. During the next months I will be waiting patiently for the arrival of these essential pictures which will illustrate the actuality of the topic in a special surprising way.

The French librarians have made a hole in my schedule. I am now filling it with afterthoughts of my conversations with Jack Stauffacher about the criteria of design. Piles of Italian books made the dangerous background of our discussions. We scrutinized the justification of typefaces, the measures of pages and the choice of material. Jack turned out to be more generous than I; he did not throw the books half as far away.

There is a hole in my conversation with Jack Stauffacher too. I am stuffing it for the moment with German matter. For a publication dedicated to Hans Peter Willberg I devised the *Typographic tales* which I am now presenting in my wonderful English.

The tales of the typographer

I Syllables

Many years ago I was asked to design a new edition of the first lecture that was given at the university of Amsterdam. The university library had left the production of the book to the printer of the city of Amsterdam. The printer was my patron. This does not work. Printers and advertising agencies are bad patrons because they try to look with the eyes of other people which will never work. There are often obstacles between principal and designer but there cannot be a mediator between them.

I had not yet seen the trial pages which I had specified when the printer handed them to the librarian. The librarian was at once satisfied and the printer leaned back in comfort. When the librarian showed me the pages I returned them immediately with the observation that the word spaces were 30% wider than in my specification.

'Is that true, mr. Stork?' the librarian asked.

'Yes, professor, that is true. We had to deviate from the designer's specification because the measure is rather narrow in respect to the body size of the typeface. Otherwise we would get more than 4 hyphens in succession at many places and that does not look well.'

The librarian understood.

I asked him to turn up folio 100 of *Baerlaeus*. With the dignified pages of the famous edition by Johannes Blaauw before him the librarian was again ready with his admiration: 'Today we cannot make this anymore, mr. Stork'

I asked his attention for the hyphens. All lines but for the first one and the last one ended with a word break. By drastically hyphenating the text the compositor had ensured legibility and this is how I wanted to proceed as well.

The librarian appreciated that I seemed to know his folio and the printer was relieved to be discharged from his responsibility for the design. The edition of the *Mercator sapiens* was saved.

Though he made almost more word breaks than I, Johannes Blaauw was not a good typographer. His repute may have been founded on his merits as a merchant of books and maps, a business I do not understand. However, the repute of dead colleagues is often useful. Many designers are recommending their newest imitations with cadaverous smell.

2 Verse

Paul Renner is the only author in my library who has devoted fundamental considerations to the composition of poetry:

'One could read poems too when they would be composed as plain text without any accent on verses and stanzas, but then we would not have poetry composition which starts a verse on a new line.' (*Die Kunst der Typografie*)

Paul Renner does not need poetry composition to compose poetry and this pleases me. To justify poetry composition nevertheless he says that the great difference in rhythm between prose and poetry requires typographic discrimination. This does not please me at all. I have never observed a great difference between both modes of language and a great difference would also be sufficiently different without my discriminating support. Bold words do not need bold letters.

In poetry composition, Renner concludes, a verse is a line.

This leads me to another story. My visitor was a famous poet. Between us were the proofs of his collected verse. I showed my visitor that the length of a few verses could have forced me to compose the whole book in a body size that would be too small for most poems. In the proofs the longest verses were running over. I was not satisfied. 'What do you want from me?' sensed the poet.

'I would make two verses of each long verse.'

The poet asked for a pencil and scribbled a little

in the proofs: 'Do you like this better?'

I saw that he had adapted his collected works to my proposal. He explained that he had his problems with long verses too. The narrow columns of magazines have no space for long verses. The shortened verses would have a better chance to survive trendy typography.

When a poem has neither rhyme nor a strong metre it can only be distinguished from bombastic prose by typographic tricks. If a poet renounces the technical characteristics of the poetic mode he has to rely completely on the technical characteristics of the composition. I have to conclude that poetry is only made by the typographer.

The typographer would at once become aware of the impact of these abstractions if he would accept the general instruction to set the poetic passages of the Bible in poetic composition. A great difference between prose and poetry should make any further indication unnecessary. But where does poetry begin, only in the bragging veteran song of Lamech in Genesis 4 : 23, 24 or already in Genesis 1 where the chorus 'and God saw that it was good' transforms an improbable cosmogony into a cosmic hymn? And where does poetry end, already with the last verse of 1 Corinthians 13: 'So will remain faith, hope and love, the three of them, but love is the greatest of all', or only with the first verse of the 14th chapter: 'Aim at love'?

The difference in rhythm between prose and poetry is a relative difference. In prose the rhythmic intervals are generally greater than in poetry. The intervals cannot be smaller than in nursery rhymes, the most compact kind of poetry, whereas they are very long in 19th century novels; almost too long for short-winded modern readers. With intervals of any size the Bible levels out the barriers between poetry and prose. All prophets are balancing skilfully between prose and poetry. In the confrontation with the language of these giants the typographer is forced to give up any pretension of interpreting or even paraphrasing mode of speech.

But what if the poet himself takes up the pencil and specifies the lines?

When this happens the poet has taken the position of the typographer prescribing the reader how to read. My engagement is with the reader. I would like to give him the freedom to read for himself if there is any poetry at all in the prose.

3

Diplomatics

This is a story about the legacy of a poet who believed that the specification of body-size, typeface, fount, line feed and orthographic details is an aspect of language. He is said to have crossed the country with his motorbike to exchange a colon by a semi-colon on the press, only to call the printer by night on his way home to make the improvement undone. Though he had raced to death with his machine many years ago his subtlety had survived in his editors. They were of the breed that distracts meaning from ellipses by counting the number of the dots. Their scrupulousness was not extended to the consistent treatment of the apparatus that I would expect from editors.

With the legacy of Adriaan Roland Holst, the most famous Dutch poet of his time, I could on the contrary do what I liked to. About him is told that he preferred to correct the proofs of his poems by having them read aloud by a visitor. He would listen carefully whether all his words were there in the right order. When he could recognize them all he was satisfied. Everybody who would make a point of it could care about orthography and interpunction; he did not. When he was told that it was nowadays no longer fashion to begin a verse with a versal he ordered that in the reprints of his poems superfluous versals should be removed. Accordingly his editors left the responsibility for the text to me.

The edition of the semi-colon-poet has drawn a scholarly correspondence about the current view on a diplomatic edition. When I had dug through the pile of paper I had also arrived at the conclusion that a diplomatic edition is an illusion.

4

Writing

In a magazine for bible translators a philologist has demanded an edition of the Bible from which can be read aloud conveniently. The designer of the edition would have to keep this condition in

Customs

mind. In the same magazine I have explained that it is difficult for a designer to meet this condition when translators are anticipating design by translating different names of God in different typography. The words Lord, LORD, Lord, *Lord* and *LORD* will all be understood by the listener as *lord*. Recently (since the sixteenth century only) philologists are persistently trying to translate words in scripts. When they will ever succeed we would get holy scriptures indeed.

In typography author and designer are meeting.

Author is any person who devises the language of the text.

Designer is any person who specifies the writing of the text.

Writing is any system of signs which is used to symbolize language.

Language and *writing* are different systems which do not depend on each other. The realms of a writing system and a language can only be connected by a bridge that is anchored in both realms. The bridge, an orthographic system, is a set of semantic conventions. Any orthography bridges one specific language with one specific writing. In one civilization there are many different languages, but their orthographic systems are linking them to the same writing because a civilization coincides with a system of writing. The Western civilization, for instance, is the cultural community which uses Western writing.

Cultural history is occurring most violently on the fault lines of the writing systems. Japan is such an eruptive region. This is why Japanese language needs one orthographic bridge to Western writing besides one to Japanese writing. The Japanese example demonstrates that a language can have different orthographies: language must not be identified with orthography. Yet I am afraid that you will nevertheless continue to think that English language requires all the atavisms of the current English spelling.

There are signals that the Chinese civilization is losing its stability too. It is such a signal when Chinese clerks are emitting the message that in a Western transcription of Chinese Peipin should from now on be spelled Beijin instead of Peking. Just think of our customs to see how alarming this message should be. I would never care how the Chinese want to spell Denver, Utrecht and Graz in Chinese writing and I will even continue to write Florence and Vienna when I have Firenze and Wien in mind without asking Italian and Austrian clerks.

There are habits that are not anchored in the great conventions of writing or in the small conventions of languages and that are nevertheless scrimping the freedom of the typographer. They are bridges leading in the misty realms of metaphysics and marketing.

The editions of the Bible offer many examples of such bad habits. There is, for instance, the universal habit of compressing about 65 books (depending on the different opinions about the biblical canon) into one volume. The typographer and the bookbinder are burdened with the complications but the translator is also hampered by them.

The Bible is ambiguous and it is intentionally so. In most cases the double meaning cannot be translated with a single expression. The second, third and fourth meanings require additional translations. Yet nobody would consider such a tree of interpretations because it would explode the volume. As a bible publisher once told me 'after all the bible should be easy to handle'.

He cannot know why this should be so because nobody knows who is reading the Bible nowadays, why this unknown reader is reading the Bible and how far he is served with a compressed volume.

I am overstating a minor problem, don't you think so? Let us see. *Pedigree of Jesus Christ*. This is the meaning of the first sentence of the New Testament according to every translation I know. This translation leaves you with the question why this part of the Bible begins with an extract of the records office; a comment to the first sentence of the New Testament has never been published. I guess that such a comment simply does not exist. Perhaps I am supposed not to ask questions. Yet I do.

My question leads me to the original text. Here are the first words:

Βιβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

(*Biblos geneleos Jesou Christou*)

Scholar folklore requires that Greek, unlike Russian, Arabic, Chinese etc., is not transcribed though a transcription would be good enough.

PLECHTIGE INZEGENING VAN HET HUWELIJK
VAN HARE KONINKLIJKEHOOGHEID
BEATRIX WILHELMINA ARMGARD
PRINSES DER NEDERLANDEN
PRINSES VAN ORANJE NASSAU
PRINSES VAN LIPPE BIESTERFELD
EN CLAUS GEORGE WILLEM OTTO FREDERIK
GEERT VON AMSBERG
IN DE WESTERKERK DER HERVORMDE GEMEENTE
TE AMSTERDAM
OP DONDERDAG 10 MAART 1966

Now take a Greek dictionary and see the beginning of the New Testament evoking the beginning of the Old Testament: *The book Genesis (of Jesus Christ)*. Hidden in an announcement of the ancestry of Jesus there is the message from the author to the reader that his book wants to be read as a paraphrase to the Old Testament that cannot be understood without understanding the source and that this is also the main purpose of the ancestry of Jesus. With its word-play the New Testament tries to resist any attempt to separate the assumed Christian book from the assumed primitive corpus of Jewish writing. The ambiguity of the gospels is expressing their unambiguous engagement with the Old Testament. Would not our habits have insisted on the single volume which leaves no room for alternative versions history might have taken a different course.

Throughout the New Testament, but notably in the gospels, the authors have extensively used the second meaning of words and expressions to explain the purpose of stories. The ambiguity of the text is not incidental. Its structural importance is charmingly illustrated by the mannerist design which encompasses the four gospels. They are running from *biblos*, the first word of Matthew, to *biblia*, the last word of John. One might almost think that he is reading a *bible*.

There is a good chance that I am totally wrong with my interpretation of the Bible. But even then it is still the original text which is initiating my speculations. As far as our translations do not allow this kind of thought they are falsifying the text. However, an attempt to avoid this corruption would result in a translation that cannot be bound in a single volume. The bookbinder decides what is in our Bible. Is he entitled?

6 Text

The battle of Waterloo performed at small scale with leaden soldiers. This is how author and designer are playing at scale the great cultural battle of the bridge between language and writing. It are not language and writing which are at stake but the text. The text is already a product of graphic design and many authors are opposing the destruction of their design by the typographer. Many authors imagine to have versified colons, indents and capitals.

In the story about Roland Holst the poem and its text are different entities. The author devises the poetry and the text is the responsibility of the designer. The text is not the poem but a graphic sign symbolising language. The word-images of the text are not the words of the verses and verses are not necessarily the same things as the lines of the composition.

In the story about the famous poet Gerard Reve even the verses are adapted to the requirements of design, but the poetry is not changed. The *text* of the book is bound to orthographic rules; its *language* is not. The evidence of this observation might be somewhat inconvenient for the conventional classification of literature. As far as a sonnet is a poem of 14 verses the sonnet is a typographic construction. Generally this typographic construction is specified by a typographic amateur (the poet) but it is nevertheless a typographic decision.

Considerations of this kind could have saved the poet Jan Hanlo his dangerous night-time expeditions. The question whether sentences should be separated by a colon or a semi-colon is more a ty-

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pographic than a poetic question, even if it is asked by a poet. Our motorized poet quibbled with typographers because typography was more important to him than poetry.

From this point of view the late-romantic literature appears in a skimming light disclosing bulges in its structure. To the lexicographic poets of the nineteenth century text was more important than language because regulated orthography was a condition for the dictionaries they were fond of.

When I was young it seemed clear to me that the orthography and the typography of the text have their reason in the language which is therefore more important than the text. Now I know too much to say this with the old confidence.

I do not remember anything important from the Irish literature of the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries (Roland Holst did). Nevertheless Ireland has sheltered the whole Western civilization by preserving faithfully Western writing. Text comes before poetry but only in this sense that writing, the eternal, precedes the fugitive languages to be at their disposal in advance.

7 Royalty

I have designed a programme for the wedding of Beatrix, the present queen of The Netherlands. I could have made a better arrangement of the title page but I expected difficulties when a name or a title would run over.

The design was composed and printed and handed to a servant of the court. He passed it to somebody else who passed it to somebody who showed the princess the whole run of one copies. Her comments were returned along the same way to the printer who interpreted them in a new design. The end of the story will be in my memoirs.

The royal design is typical for the general illusion that typography should express meaning. I had already violated the first principles of design in my arrangement of the lines. It was not enough. Nothing, absolutely nothing could be left to the understanding of the reader.

The opinion that typography should symbolize the meaning of the text is not limited to small royal circles. It can be found in many handbooks of typography. A more edifying discussion was reported to me by the teacher of the small school in our village.

The school has a tradition of discussing the design of a new book before it is taken in use. This practice stimulates the critical sense of the children (in fact everything is discussed in a similar way) and it is also an advantage when from the beginning the children are aware of the structure of the books from which they should learn something. Listen.

—I do not like this design because bold type is spoiling the appearance of the pages.

—I think that you are wrong. When you look carefully you would see that the designer has accentuated important paragraphs by printing them in bold type. What you do not like has been done in your interest.

—That would make things only worse. If you are right the greater part of the book is not important.

In the middle voice I recognize the royal point of view. My sympathy is with the other little speaker.

8

Content

Content is the meaning which we are attributing to form. Content does not exist as empirical reality. Content comes from my interpretation of the phenomena; you might interpret the same phenomena differently and create a different content by doing so. I do not take the beginning of the Bible as information about the origin of heaven and earth, but as a poetic bid to accept design as our dire duty. Strange enough, not everybody sees this meaning; we are making different contents.

While conceiving content we only *see* form. We might safely say that behind the surface a content is hidden, for this statement cannot be verified. When a surface can be scratched away, only a new surface is brought to the surface. When peeling onions we better stop in time if we do not want to look through our tears at our empty hands.

The author devises a shape of language which can

be interpreted in a literary content. The text symbolises the form of the language in a written form. This form has a calligraphic or a typographic content, but definitely not a literary content. When I would have to know the 'real' content of the Bible first, I could never design an edition of the bible. A typographic idea, however, is sufficient. But this typographic conception is my own creation as well; I can not rely on the decrees of famous colleagues. And if an author ever wants to explain me how I have to understand his book he simply could have written his book that way.

The Bible, my example for everything, is an excellent example of the chilling effect of established content. Generations of believers and scholars have been preaching the final meaning of the Bible. We are no longer looking at its many forms, for we are at once 'seeing' the petrified contents. As the terrible result of this agreement we cannot read anymore. Where content is conspicuous the book is finished. May God send us heretics.

INSTITV

TIO PRINCIPES CHRI

stiani, saluberrimis refer

ta praecipis, p. Eras-

mum Roteroda-

mum, ab eo-

dem reco-

gnita

cu. alijs no.-

nullis eode. p.tine.-

tibus, quoru. catalogu.

in p.xima reperies pagella.

APUD INCLYTAM

BASILEAM

The 3 barbarians

Hans Holbein ij Erasmus of Rotterdam Johann Froben

There is no logical programme for hyphenating. The rule makes a reasonable impression: words can be broken between syllables. But syllables are different in different orthographic systems. If you want to know whether a sequence of letters is a syllable you have to look it up in a list which has been arbitrarily composed by our servants, the ministers. By consequence automatic hyphenating is impossible. The logical structure of the micro-processor is a menace for the sophisticated art of word breaking. The computer will eventually throw us back to those barbarous times when there were no orthographic rules. Artists and scholars made word breaks at every possible position, which is any position between two characters.

In 1518 a book was made by Johan Froben, a printer, Hans Holbein, a designer, and Erasmus of Rotterdam, an author. I have copied the arrangement of the title (the original has INTSITV on the first line).

With such stuff the three men pretended to teach good manners to the would-be Christian princes of their time, which was a time without rules for hyphenating. The three did what they liked. There is no pretext for their arbitrary breaking of words, sometimes between syllables, sometimes halfway through a syllable, sometimes indicated with a hyphen, sometimes without notice, sometimes going together with a shift from capitals to lower case and in two instances with a

change of typeface (in those barbarous days every body-size was a typeface). It would have been easy to make a nice arrangement of the title without any word breaks. They did not try for they did not care.

We can not isolate them as artists from whom extravagances can be expected. Froben, Holbein and Erasmus were meeting the typographic standard of the sixteenth century. The name of the standard is Mannerism and its mood is freedom. It is in mannerist freedom that the three excelled.

Even the clerks of our administrations are counting my three barbarians among the great teachers of our civilization but beware: *you are not supposed to learn their lessons.*

The logic of design

demonstrates that our typographic customs do not accept a *classic* or a *mannerist* attitude. The designer is expected to conform to *romantic* manners.

Yes, I know, you prefer to say that you are a *modern* designer, but by doing so you are classifying yourself as *ephemeral* from the logical point of view.

- A. sign
- B. symbol
- C. reality

In this list A is a sign symbolizing a number.

- A sign
- A word
- A thought

In this list A is a sign symbolizing a word.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQRSTU
VWXYZ

In this row A is a sign symbolizing A.

∞ is a sign (lemniscate) used in mathematics as a symbol for the infinite number. My dictionary says *an* infinite number but I would not say so. As a mathematical symbol ∞ is a numeral just like 1, 2 and 3. I would not say that 4 is a symbol for a number four either, because I only know of one number four.

In technology ∞ has been introduced recently as a symbol for durability.

In photography ∞ is a symbol for the minimal distance at which you may focus your camera for pictures that are not conspicuously unsharp when you do not enlarge them.

∞ and A, the two signs of these examples do not have a meaning of their own. Any sign can have any meaning that is assigned to it. Without assignment a sign has no meaning. To summarize: *a symbol is a sign with a meaning assigned to it.*

The problem has not yet been solved in this summary. I try another sign *vis*. The new sign is composed of three other signs. This composition is called *word*, a graphic word; being a sign it has no meaning of its own.

Accidentally this picture has been assigned a meaning in English, French and Dutch orthography. In the three different systems the graphic word *vis* symbolizes a lingual *word*.

In its turn the lingual word *vis* is a sign symboliz-

Sign or symbol

ing a thought. *Vis* symbolizes *power* in English thinking. *Vis* symbolizes *vice* in French thinking. *Vis* symbolizes *fish* in Dutch thinking.

Fish should finally be the ultimate meaning of *vis* in Dutch but it is not. Even Dutch thinking does not necessarily come to an end at this level. The notion *fish* is symbolizing a category of *animals* or a category of *food* etc. I have italicized *animals* and *food* because these notions are signs symbolizing other categories of phenomena etc. The complete number of these speculations is ∞ . They would arrive at an end when we could face reality immediately without the interference of symbols.

In the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians Paul has explained beautifully why an ultimate statement about reality is beyond human imagination. In speak of our time Paul might have said:

Science is fiction

*Sign and symbol are brothers, the prophet and the priest.
The prophet Moses had led his people out of slavery into
the desert of freedom. In his absence the priest Aaron
takes his chance. From our treasures (the signs) he
makes a glossy symbol, a holy prejudice.*

The worship of the golden calf

Typography does not go that far. The designer needs not worry about symbols and meaning, he even should not. His business is the arrangement of signs in the right order. My order is not the sequence of letters and sentences, that is the business of the author, but the order of shapes and

counter-shapes of letters, (graphic) words, lines and margins.

In this point of view, the only one which can be defended, the graphic word evokes a lingual word.

The graphic word also evokes prejudice. This symbolism can be silly in design.

Thirty years ago the director of Querido was fond of green. Whenever I presented a sketch for a violet book-jacket she said automatically: we are not catholic. By trying yellow I could trigger the same automatism. Finally I turned to green, knowing that she would say: that is beautiful; why did not you make this at once?

Turning away from the sign to the 'meaning' looks wise and deep. I have only met cultivated illiteracy or just humbug in symbolism.

Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in favilla: Teste David cum Sibylla. Quantus tremor est futurus. Quando iudex est venturus, cuncta stricte discussurus. Tuba mirum spargens sonum per sepulchra regionum coget omnes ante thronum. Mors stupebit et natura cum resurgit creatura. Iudicanti responsura. Liber scriptus proferetur in quo totum continetur, unde mundus iudicetur. Iudex ergo cum sedebit. Quidquid latet apparebit: Nil inultum remanebit. Quid sum miser tunc dicturus? Quem patronum rogaturus? Cum vix iustus sit securus? Rex tremendae maiestatis, qui salvandos salvas gratis, salva me, fons pietatis. Recordare, Iesu pie, quod sum causa tuae viae; ne me perdas illa die. Quarens me, sedisti lassus; redemisti crucem passus; tantus labor non sit cassus. Iuste iudex ultionis, donum fac remissionis ante diem rationis Ingemisco, tamquam reus; culpa rubet vultus meus: supplicanti parce, Deus. Qui Mariam absolvisti et latronem exaudisti, mihi quoque spem dedisti. Preces meae non sunt dignae, sed tu bonus fac benigne, ne perenni cremer igne. Inter oves locum praesta et ab haedis me sequestra, statuens in parte dextra. Confutatis aledictis, flammis acribus addictis, voca me cum benedictis. Oro supplex et acclinis, cor contritum quasi cinis, gere curam mei finis. Lacrimosa dies illa, qua resurget ex favilla iudicandus homa reus Huic ergo parce, Deus, pie Iesu Domine, dona eis requiem.

The classic

There is a great tradition of writing poetry as solid text, filling the measure of the column like any prose text. This is still the common way of composing the oldest hymns of Western civilization in liturgical books. Try to read the column at left as prose:

This example of current practice should demonstrate that typographic rules about paragraphs are arbitrary. There are alternatives for the classic mode.

The custom of setting verse as lists of lines is extremely artificial but it makes some sense. However, the noise about the widow, the closest relative of verse is sheer nonsense. Widows are the consequence of paragraphs. It would be easy to avoid them by avoiding paragraphs. When I am in need of a funny statement I take *Bookmaking* by Marshall Lee. Explaining widows he says: [when a widow is] a line of conversation it is not a widow but the last line of a paragraph is [probably not when it is not a widow?]. He is also suggesting that a widow is only a widow when the composition is justified. I care for typography. I do not care for widows. A designer who is dreaming of neat rectangles should keep his hands from typography.

A lesson in PROPAGANDA

At the time when Norman Schwarzkopf was daily concealing on television the facts about a war in Mesopotamia, Dutch television emitted on another canal my sequence of 8 weekly programmes on handwriting and lettering. From the data about the response it might be concluded that the series has attracted an average number of 200 000 spectators in The Netherlands only. I have no data of the response in Belgium but it might be assumed fairly that we have addressed 300 000 people at least. From the book by Frank Blokland 13 300 copies have been sold. This number is an indication of the active interest in the programme.

I have received reactions from colleagues and scholars on the method of my approach, the analysis of the subject and the technique of my presentation, but also from the dear boy of 3 years old who said: I have seen you on television writing beautiful letters. Between these extremes a great audience was surprised to see the many different aspects of such an extremely common subject as writing is supposed to be. Frank Blokland has succeeded in bringing the literature on calligraphy on a higher level; his book makes better reading and is a more reliable guide than any other book on the subject.

As could be expected from a designer I am not satisfied with our performance but I am very happy with its impact. Look at it from the ATypI point of view. It is our most important objective to make everybody aware of the importance of writing for civilization because we have to make a living of this attitude. This great objective is the reason for sending *Letterletter* all over the world in the impressive run of more than 300 copies. ATypI even went as far as spending a lot of money for bringing a few hundred people together at Oxford to participate in the circus of Type 90. Of course, such activities should be continued (*Letterletter* at least). However, in respect to their effect they are waste of time and money. Even some famous members of ATypI have not yet found the time to read the previous copy of this marvellous *Letterletter*. We should rather learn the little trick of presenting

our hobby as first class entertainment to the world. This will cost a lot of time too but this far more effective method does not cost our association any money. Nevertheless Frank Blokland and I got paid for our work. And this is not all. The book is reprinted and the sequence of programmes will be repeated in September. You will have to multiply my big figures for estimating the total response.

ATypI is planning its next general meeting now. You are preparing for performing again the ritual of repeating old questions. How could the copyright on typedesign be protected, how could designers be paid reasonably, how could the significance of design be made clear, and more of the same. I recommend the Dutch way.

We have not yet solved any of our problems. We have just shown how a stroke can change the world. But that is already enough to make everybody understand that this cannot be a cheap achievement which may be stolen. The mystery of writing has just been indicated. But this is sufficient to make everybody curious of further revelations.

I have forgotten to care for the commercial aspects of our enterprise. But the commercial result reminds me of its importance. In The Netherlands everybody has learnt that it can be rewarding to care for the stuff of writing. We have shifted our objectives from the margin of public interest into focus. From now on ATypI might talk differently.

Teleac (the foundation which has produced the programme) will provide a video-tape of the series for showing the programme at the congress of ATypI in Parma.